

# SMOKE: The summer's closing act



SUCCESSFUL BURNOUT operations around the perimeter of the Jolly Mountain Wildfire created most of the smoke the Upper County has seen in the past few days. The last brief for night

crews, most of which were involved with the burnouts, occurred on Saturday, Sept. 16.

Photo courtesy Incident Command

## Several days with hazardous air quality

by Jim Fossett

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UPPER KITTITAS CO. — Since before the outbreak of the Jolly Mountain Fire the region has experienced few days without smoke.

First it came from the wildfires in British Columbia — 1,249 of them at season's end — the largest of those igniting early in July, including Stillwater Lake (growing to 28 square miles), Lucas Lake (to 32 square miles), and Elephant Hill (to 741 square miles). According to the British Columbia Wildfire Service wildfires in that country consumed about 4,517 square miles, an area



POOR AIR QUALITY levels have plagued the Upper County for a good portion of the summer, as this photo illustrates at the Conner Lumber Mill in the Teanaway, where last week there wasn't a half-mile of visibility.

N.K.C. TRIBUNE/Jim Fossett photo - 2017

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NORTHERN KITTITAS COUNTY  
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roughly equivalent to twice the size of Kittitas County.

On Aug. 11 the Jolly Mountain and Norse Peak Wildfires ignited. Early in the game many didn't know the smoke was actually coming from Norse Peak, not Jolly Mountain.

As of Saturday, Sept 16, successful burnout initiatives around the perimeter of Jolly Mountain continued to produce smoke — but they also served to put the fire at 30% containment. That positioned the region for lower EVAC levels and the Jolly Mountain

Wildfire Incident Command for a transition to a Type 3 Team.

Although through the summer and approaching the first day of fall tomorrow, the Upper County experienced several brief respites from smoke most people surveyed believe this is the smokiest fire season in recent history, measurably worse than the Table Mountain and Taylor Bridge Wildfires five years ago.

"And pretty soon we'll be complaining about winter cold," quipped one resident.